

**APPROVED**  
**MINUTES**

**Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Committee meeting**

Sept. 27, 2007, 7:30 a.m., 1st floor Conference Room, 141 Keyes Road.

**Members present:**

Jim Terry, Chair; Barbara Pike; Gerry Boyle; Elissa Brown; Andrea Siani; Jim Coutre; Ken Miller; & Harry Beyer, Scribe for this meeting.

**Members absent:**

None.

**Others present:**

Patricia Domigan, Bill DeSantis, & Mark Louro of the VHB team; Selectman Dinny McIntyre; and about fifteen citizens.

**Materials distributed**

by VHB:

1. "Alternative BFRT Routes around White Pond" (Fig. 1, Tables 1 & 2).
2. Four photos of trail-road intersections.

by Judy LaRocca:

"Norwottuck Rail Trail Photos" (including Adaptive Cycling Equipment).

**Minutes of August 30, 2007 & Sept. 13, 2007** were reviewed, revised, and **approved**.

**Record of Issues Discussed:**

**Alternative routes around White Pond**, presentation by VHB, with questions & comments from the committee:

1. Mark corrected a bridge load figure that he had presented at a previous meeting from 28,000 pounds to 18,000 pounds.
2. VHB said its review and analysis of alternative routes around White Pond is 75% complete.
3. VHB said "Functional Class" is a federal classification of roadways based upon volume of traffic use. It is included in Table 1 because requirements (e.g., shoulder width) differ for different classes. In Table 2, grades were not assigned for "Aesthetics" because of their subjective nature, and were not assigned for "Conformity with Master Plan" because VHB was not aware of a master plan at the Concord-Sudbury line.
4. In Table 2, "Length" and "Construction Cost" of the alternative trails are measured from a point slightly north of Powder Mill Rd. to the point where the alternative trail returns to the rail-trail. For the BFRT they are measured from the point north of Powder Mill to the Sudbury line. VHB agreed that, to enable valid comparisons, the BFRT figures will be revised to include the Sudbury portions.
5. In Table 2, VHB said that Mass. GIS was used as a basis for information on "Environmental/Historical Impacts. The BFRT route was considered to have less environmental impact than the alternative routes because the trail would remain on the railroad ROW and no filling of wetlands, road widening, etc. would be required. A committee member recommended separating the Environmental and Historical criteria.

6. In response to a question, VHB said that the analysis of alternative routes relates to bicycle use in bike lanes on roadways; it assumes that pedestrians and wheelchairs will use sidewalks. VHB said it did not consider an off-road, parallel trail separated from roadways; that impacts for such a trail would be much higher; that it would have many operational problems; and that it was less desirable for many reasons.
7. VHB will add to its analysis sidewalks for pedestrians where such are needed.
8. In response to a question, VHB said that a sidewalk along Dakin Road would be steeper than the ADA 1:12 slope requirement, but that ADA regulations provide for an exception in such cases. Some committee members questioned whether an analysis should proceed for any routes that effectively bar wheelchairs. Jim Terry said the committee should discuss the issue.
9. Jim Terry advised VHB to continue the Dakin Rd. routes south on Pantry Rd. to rejoin the rail-trail, rather than having them run east along busy Route 117.
10. In response to comments by committee members, VHB agree to correct the placement of Plainfield Rd. on Figure 1 and to verify the places at which sidewalks don't exist and are needed.
11. In response to a question, VHB said that the criterion of "Safety" had been rolled into the "Geometry & Traffic" criterion on Table 2. A committee member suggested that "Safety" was important enough to be a separate, explicit criterion. VHB said that, unless safety criteria were provided by the committee, "safety" was too subjective a criterion for their analysis. The committee member said that Dakin Rd. was presently unsafe, with runners using the roadway. Jim Terry said the committee may have to use its subjective opinion of safety. VHB said their final design will be safe; they would not design it otherwise.
12. A committee member said that an alternative route down Powder Mill Road would serve the larger community by improving access to Sanborn, Peabody, and Willard schools.
13. A committee member recommended that an "Other-Costs" criterion be added to the analysis. VHB agreed, noting that ROW-taking costs would be included in the criterion.
14. In response to a committee member's comment that the Sudbury portion of the BFRT may never be built, VHB said this point is discussed in the narrative to accompany the final tables.

**Street Crossings, presentation by VHB, with questions & comments from the committee:**

15. VHB said that safety is the overriding factor: bollards, gates, signs, and other measures serve to alert trail users and to stop motor vehicles on the roads.
16. VHB said that the Concord Police Department prefers gates to bollards because bollards are harder to move, especially in winter snow and ice. But the department is not opposed to bollards.
17. VHB identified the photos of trail-road intersections: #1, bollards by parking spaces on a Mansfield trail; #2, A gate in Bedford on the Minuteman Commuter Bikeway, for emergency vehicles only; #3, gates at a road crossing on the Minuteman Commuter Bikeway; & #4, a modern "Crossing Alert System."
18. VHB's current practice is to put bollards on small islands, splitting the lanes of the trail.
19. An important design consideration: ensure that the gate or bollard does not restrict trail users movements and cause them to back up onto the road. Bill does not like the photo #3 gates because they may cause this problem. One committee member pointed out that gates are

effective in slowing bikes; another member questioned whether bike calming measures are needed.

20. A committee member pointed out the danger of small children, riding ahead of adults, failing to stop at an intersection. VHB said that traffic calming is achieved not by one thing, but by the right combination of signs and design features.

21. In response to a question, VHB said that "S" curves on a trail (reverse curves) do not necessarily slow bikers; some teenagers cut across the S. However, in Concord, in order to use an existing crosswalk or to have the trail cross roads at a right angle, VHB plans to design a modified S curve at several crossings.

22. The pros and cons of several crossing devices (including the Vancouver "cattle chute" were discussed. Some restrict the passage of Bikes pulling trailers. VHB described one crossing he's seen, with a stop sign for the roadway and a yield sign for the trail, as "an accident waiting to happen."

23. In response to a committee request for examples of good solutions, VHB said that when the committee decides whether it prefers bollards or gates, VHB will provide examples, either in photographs or in catalogs.

24. Referring to photo #4, VHB described the Crossing Alert System. An infra-red detector on the trail activates beacons on the poles, flashing yellow for the road and red for the trail.

25. In answer to a question, VHB said that crosswalks will be painted at all road crossings. Bill said that motor vehicles are required to stop for pedestrians in crosswalks regardless of whether they are walking or riding a bike.

26. VHB plans to upgrade the push-button crossing system at Main Street. In response to a committee member's suggestion that any bollards used at the south side of Main Street be compatible with granite bollards on the north side, VHB said it is coordinating that matter with its historian and the town.

27. A committee member pointed out, and VHB agreed, that the Concord Police Department will be asked to review all traffic-control measures before decisions are made.

28. A committee member pointed out that road-crossing measures must be adapted to the context. E.g., if traffic is very heavy at an intersection, trail users should not be required to wait an inordinate amount of time.

29. The committee thanked VHB for its presentation.

#### **Other business:**

30. The committee plans to discuss the alternative routes around White Pond at its next meeting.

31. The committee's next meeting was scheduled for 7:30 a.m., Thursday, October 18, in the Selectman's Room at the Town House.

32. Barbara offered to loan members of the committee a DVD of the Natural Resources Committee meeting of Sept. 19 at which two environmental professionals hired by a group of Concord citizens challenged aspects of the environmental study conducted by VHB. Ken borrowed the DVD first, and intends to pass it on to others.

**Citizen Comments:**

33. Arra Avakian expressed disappointment in the discussion of alternative routes, feeling that the discussion appeared to show that mere due diligence was being accorded the alternatives, rather than honest consideration. He thinks that Alternative #2 is "more of a sieve than a pail." Although two alternatives running down steep Dakin Road were considered, the best alternative was not even considered. Also, three very significant criteria were not considered in the analysis: The benefits to children biking to Willard, to Sanborn, and to Peabody Schools. Also, the environmental impact of running the BFRT beside White Pond merits a low grade.

34. Judy LaRocca says that other states have shared-use paths adjacent to but separated from roadways. She will send the committee a URL for a relevant Florida study. Also, driveway crossings are a criterion used to measure safety. She asks whether child bikers are to use the sidewalks.

35. Julie Melbin thought that one goal was to force bikers to walk across roads at crossings, a practice especially important for kids. Yet some of the discussion seemed to indicate this will not be required. Whether this is a goal or not will greatly affect the type of road crossing measures to be used.

36. Jane Coutre, noting the tendency of young boys to ride ahead of adults, with their minds elsewhere, strongly favors gates.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 a.m.

**Recorder:** Harry Beyer